

## International outlook

By Sol W. Sanders

### More military aid for Turkey will help keep Russia at bay

The headlines about the Reagan Administration's anxiety over Central America and over deployment of NATO nuclear missiles in Germany have overshadowed a critical mid-March decision on Capitol Hill concerning military aid to Turkey. The Administration has boosted the military-aid request for Turkey's 500,000-member army to \$755 million this year from \$546.9 million in 1981 to keep Ankara's largely Korean War-vintage weapons from rusting into total obsolescence.

The Turks, with their reputation for prowess in combat and their historical role as a strategic wall of resistance against Russian penetration into the Mediterranean, are crucial to Washington's worldwide strategy. Yet turning Turkey into a major player in halting Soviet imperialism has been stymied by hostile congressional reaction. This is largely because of friction between Turkey and Greece and the extraordinary power of the Greek lobby in Congress. Given the relatively smaller number of Greek-Americans—an estimated 3 million—this bloc is as potent as the Jewish lobby for Israel.



Ankara's army must rely mainly on 30-year-old weapons.

The Pentagon is limited by the demand by congressional friends of Greece that \$7 must be given to Athens for every \$10 for Ankara. This year the argument is compounded by events in Athens, where Socialist Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou has been using U.S. NATO bases in Greece as a whipping boy. Despite pre-election threats to quit NATO and protestations that Greece has no enemies and therefore does not need the alliance, Papandreou's real demands appear to be price and face-saving control over the bases. Because of the large aid request for Turkey, the 7-10 ratio weakens Washington's negotiating position with Athens and may result in high payments for the Greek bases.

**Pivot point.** More than ever, the U.S. needs Turkey as an effective member of NATO. With the fate of U.S. nuclear missile deployment in Western Europe still in some doubt, despite the German conservatives' victory in early March (BW—Feb. 28), Turkey's geographical position as the logical

pivot on NATO's southeastern flank becomes more vital. An effective Turkish military, particularly with the high-performance fighter aircraft written into this year's U.S. budget, would present Moscow with what military strategists call a *tous azimuts* dilemma—a threat from all directions.

Poised on the Soviet Union's southern border, Turkey could act as a deterrent not only to any Russian movement toward NATO in central Europe but also to any thrust into Iran through the Caucasus Mountains. Furthermore, although the military regime that took power in 1980 has been hesitant about appearing to pull American—or Israeli—chestnuts out of Mideast fires, Ankara will permit the upgrading of three airfields in eastern Turkey. The fields would be under a NATO flag, but Ankara has agreed that in a major crisis they could serve as bases for the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force, the mobile deterrent to any Soviet threat or locally inspired destabilization in the Persian Gulf oil fields.

Washington also needs Turkey for its unique role in the Islamic world. Although right-wing politicians have flirted with Islamic fundamentalism in the past, the army sees itself as the guardian of the tradition of secular nationalism begun under Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s, a model for the whole post-World War II anticolonial movement (BW—Dec. 21, 1981). Growing clashes between right-wing fanatics and Communists and leftists were one reason the military took over. Turkey is, in fact, the only Mideast nation that has relations with all countries in the area. Its Kemalist foreign policy has enabled Ankara to maintain low-level diplomatic relations with Israel while at the same time making socialist Iraq its No. 1 trading partner last year. Turkey wants to play a greater role in pacifying the region, and a strengthened military establishment could help.

**Cyprus' future.** Like most U.S. foreign policy problems, however, the relationship with Turkey is not simple. State Dept. analysts may have a point when they say that, whether Washington likes it or not, Turkey and Greece must be seen as a single strategic unit. The two countries' historic animosity flared into a major crisis when Ankara's troops invaded Cyprus, 40 mi. off the Turkish coast, in 1974 after local Greeks threatened to unite with Athens. Only by minimizing the animus can the U.S. take advantage of Turkey's potential. Yet there is little hope of an immediate settlement in Cyprus. Moreover, boundary disputes in the Aegean Sea arising from rival claims on an archipelago constantly exacerbate the Athens-Ankara relationship. NATO naval maneuvers in the area had to be abandoned recently. Offshore oil drilling rights also are an issue.

Despite the domestic political risks, Turkey's growing importance to U.S. strategy is forcing the Reagan Administration to confront the issue. Staunch American defense of the military regime against criticism from other NATO partners has strengthened Ankara-Washington ties. This U.S. policy has proved justified, at least in the short term. West Germany—which had been in the forefront of opposition to the military government's policies—recently transferred \$160 million in nonmilitary aid. Furthermore, a \$54 million slice of military aid automatically went ahead this January without a ripple. Japan, France, and Britain, which had been waiting for the Germans to make their decision, are expected now to move ahead with their aid packages. ■